

**final**

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**NUREG-0583**

# **environmental statement**

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related to operation of  
**SHOOTERING CANYON  
URANIUM PROJECT**

**PLATEAU RESOURCES, LTD.**

**July 1979**

**Docket No. 40-8698**

**U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission**

**Office of Nuclear Material  
● Safety and Safeguards**

### 2.9.1.2 Fauna

The limited vegetation in the area may account for the relatively low diversity of wildlife species observed by the applicant. Wildlife representative of the facility area are listed in Table 2.10. Lack of any aquatic habitat in the immediate vicinity of the site precludes the establishment of any significant amphibian populations.

Rodents, lagomorphs, and carnivores were the dominant mammalian species present at the site. The most abundant rodent was Ord's kangaroo rat (ER, Table 2.8-2). The sandy soil on the site is the preferred habitat of this burrowing species. The area is not considered to be prime habitat for big game species, and no major populations of these animals are present in the immediate vicinity of the site. Mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), elk (*Cervis canadensis*), and bison (*Bison bison*) occur in the region, but they are generally associated with the pinyon-juniper woodlands and coniferous forests at higher elevations in the mountains north of the site (ER, Fig. 2.8-2). Some mule deer may occasionally enter the area during severe winters or during the hunting season, but their normal winter and summer ranges are in the Henry Mountains north of the site and at higher elevations to the west (ER, Fig. 2.8-2). The closest critical winter range for mule deer in the region is approximately 19 km (12 miles) to the northwest (ER, Sect. 2.8). Desert bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*) also occur in the region, being generally confined to rugged terrain south of the Colorado River (ER, Fig. 2.8-2). A small population is located north of the river about 24 km (15 miles) southwest of the site. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources has announced plans to introduce desert bighorn sheep into the Little Rockies area immediately east of the proposed site in 1979.

Only eight species of birds were observed at the site, four of which were raptors. Only one nest was observed; it was an active American Kestrel nest, located on the south end of the butte on the west side of the tailings impoundment site. A prairie falcon was observed about 3.2 km (2 miles) north of the site during a reconnaissance survey in May 1977.

The western kingbird and horned lark were the only two songbirds observed during field studies. The mourning dove was observed on the site during July 1977 and is the only species of upland game bird that regularly inhabits the area. The chukar (*Alectoris chukar*) and blue grouse (*Dendragapus obscurus*), other upland game birds, can be found at some of the higher elevations in southeastern Utah where forest and mountain brush vegetation provide adequate food and cover. These areas are located more than 8 km (5 miles) from the proposed plant site, in the Henry Mountains or near the Colorado River. The project site is not located in a major waterfowl migration corridor. During the staff site visit in June 1978, two mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) were observed in a stock pond located about 8 km (5 miles) south-southeast of the project site. In addition, with Lake Powell located approximately 16 km (10 miles) to the south, it is conceivable that some waterfowl may be seen in the vicinity during spring and fall migrations.

No endangered species of wildlife were observed on the project site during the initial surveys conducted during July and October 1977 and reported in Sect. 2.8 of the ER. The project site is within the range of the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and the American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*). At the request of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a helicopter and ground field survey was made on June 6, 1979, to determine whether either of these species or nest sites were present over an area described by a 16-km (10-mile) radius from the center of the site. No evidence of either species was found in the survey area. However, with the Colorado River and Lake Powell being located about 16 km (10 miles) from the site, these species may be observed in the region during migration periods.

### 2.9.2 Aquatic

As discussed in Sect. 2.6.1, there are no permanent streams or pools in the permit area that could harbor aquatic organisms throughout the year. There are approximately 24 km (15 miles) of stream drainage courses separating the proposed mill site from Lake Powell (ER, Sect. 6.1) which, because of a porous substrate and infrequent rainfall, only sporadically contain water. When water is present in these stream channels, it is in the form of highly turbid flash floods following rainstorms. Thus, the migration of fishes and other aquatic organisms from the lake to the vicinity of the site is prevented. Because of a lack of aquatic habitat in the project area, the applicant conducted no sampling program for aquatic biota.

There are three endangered aquatic species found in Utah.<sup>17</sup> The humpback chub (*Gila cypha*) is found in widely separated areas of the Green and Colorado rivers, from the Grand Canyon